

The mission of the Tennessee Historical Commission is to encourage the inclusive diverse study of Tennessee's history for the benefit of future generations; to protect, preserve, interpret, operate, maintain, and administer historic sites; to mark important locations, persons, and events in Tennessee history; to assist in worthy publication projects; to review, comment on and identify projects that will potentially impact state-owned and non-state-owned historic properties; to locate, identify, record and nominate to the National Register of Historic Places all properties which meet National Register criteria, and to implement other programs of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended.



For more information,
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www.state.tn.us/environment/hist/index.html

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TENNESSEE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

**An overview of the programs
and services offered by the
Tennessee State Historic
Preservation Office**



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FEDERAL PROGRAMS

PLANNING

The Tennessee Historical Commission is currently revising its state plan for historic preservation. The first statewide preservation plan was prepared in 1970. The plan was revised and rewritten in 1986 and again in 1996. The THC hopes to have a new plan for historic preservation completed by the end of 2004 and if funds are available to publish it during 2005. To view a copy of the draft preservation plan, visit our website at www.state.tn.us/environment/hist/pdf/HistoricPreservDRAFT.pdf.

SURVEY

The foundation of most historic preservation efforts is the Survey and Inventory program. The THC's main responsibility is to "direct and conduct a comprehensive statewide survey of historic properties and maintain inventories of such properties." Nearly 75% of the state's historic structures have been surveyed. A much smaller number of archeological sites have been recorded. Approximately 65% (roughly 140,000) of the National Register-eligible structures throughout the state have been surveyed.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of historic resources. Listing of a property on the register does not ensure its preservation. Neither does it restrict the rights of private property owners. As of October 2003, there were 1884 listings in the National Register from Tennessee. Nominations are generated by property owners, neighborhood associations, local historical societies or preservation groups, local governments, and THC staff.

PRESERVATION TAX INCENTIVES

The preservation tax incentive for historic buildings is a federally financed tax incentive for the rehabilitation of historic buildings. This 20% credit is available to income-producing properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places and can often be the impetus for historic preservation that might not otherwise occur. Over the last four years, the THC has aided the application of 98 businesses for this credit, resulting in \$19 million in federal tax credits for Tennesseans.

FEDERAL PROGRAMS

CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROGRAM

In 1980, an amendment was added to the National Historic Preservation Act to foster local government participation in preservation efforts. Since then, twenty-eight certified local governments have formed in Tennessee to review and comment on National Register nominations, tax credit applications, and grant applications. The THC laid the foundation for these local governments by processing applications for their certification to the National Park Service, and continues to aid their development by offering grants, technical assistance, advice, and workshops.

PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act calls for the review of any project using federal assistance. The objective of the review is to compel federal agencies to account for historic properties as they plan and execute their programs. Over the last four years, the THC has conducted over 12,900 Section 106 reviews. The efforts of the THC expedited the approval for such projects as the Justin P. Wilson Cumberland Trail. In 1988, the state of Tennessee ordered a review process to be undertaken by the THC prior to the demolition or alteration of any state properties that may be of historical significance. Approximately 1,200 reviews occur each year under this statute.

FEDERAL PRESERVATION GRANTS

There are two grants available from the THC. Because of the importance of completing the statewide survey and preservation plan, most of the grant funds allocated by the commission are intended for site-specific and thematic survey projects. These grants fall within the Survey and Planning category. The other type of grant is for the acquisition or restoration of properties that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. These are called Acquisition and Development projects. These grants have frequently proven to be the means by which restoration projects were initiated and in turn were the catalyst for expanded awareness and support of preservation within a community. Although there is little funding remaining for these grants, a few are awarded each year. Recent projects funded by this program include the restoration of the Chestnut House in Englewood and the Cumberland County Courthouse.

STATE PROGRAMS

STATE OWNED HISTORIC SITES

Numerous sites have been acquired by the State for the purpose of preservation and interpretation for the public. At present, there are eighteen sites that are owned, supported, or overseen by the THC. Many people, including Tennesseans and out-of-state visitors, gain their first exposure to history and to the importance of preserving historic structures by visiting a historic site or museum. The importance of historic buildings as tourism destinations is increasingly recognized and these sites play an important role in historic preservation.

HISTORICAL MARKERS

One of the most visible programs of the THC is the Historical Markers Program. This program began in the 1950's and has resulted in the placement of more than 1400 signs commemorating and marking the locations of sites, persons, and events significant in Tennessee history. The three methods of funding the placement of historical markers include: full funding by the sponsor; full funding by the THC; or 50% funding by the sponsor and 50% funding by the THC. This program is very valuable in introducing travelers to Tennessee's unique history.

TENNESSEE WARS COMMISSION

In 1994, the state congress passed legislation to establish the Tennessee Wars Commission. The THC was then designated to serve as the TWC. The duties of the TWC are to "coordinate planning, preservation, and promotion of the structures, buildings, sites and battlefields of Tennessee associated with the American Revolution and the War Between the States."

PUBLICATIONS

This program provides assistance through grants to other agencies, i.e., historical societies, universities, etc., for various publications relating to Tennessee History. In addition to this grant program, the Commission has itself published historical reference works. The THC also publishes *The Courier*, a thrice-yearly newsletter that contains news of the Commission's activities, information of historical interest, and feature articles.